

The rising cost of gasoline has created real suffering in Florida – for seniors living on fixed incomes, for middle-class families struggling with higher food and utility bills, and for young adults who can barely afford to drive their cars to work. We need a comprehensive, balanced plan aimed at reducing our dependence on foreign oil. That means increasing production of American-made energy in an environmentally safe way while promoting conservation and greater efficiency.

Specifically, we should focus on the following solutions for our energy needs:

Investing in Renewable Energy

Florida's own burgeoning renewable industry is a leader in developing alternative sources of energy. That's why I voted for legislation that would invest in research and development of clean and renewable fuels like solar and wind power as well as alternative fuels such as ethanol and bio-diesel.

Reducing America's Dependence on Foreign Oil

In 1970, we imported 24 percent of our oil. Today, that figure is 70 percent. We must reduce our dependence on foreign oil by exploring domestic sources and building new refineries. We haven't built an oil refinery in the U.S. in 30 years. Since 1981, the number of refineries has dropped from 324 to 148.

Drilling in the remote wilderness of Alaska could increase total U.S. reserves by 50 percent. This region, which is now off limits to drilling, holds the single largest deposit of oil in the entire United States.

Encouraging Conservation Efforts

Voluntary conservation programs and greater efficiency should be part of any balanced energy plan. That's why I voted in favor of raising fuel economy standards for cars and trucks for the first time in 32 years.

Holding Big Oil Accountable

We must also hold Big Oil accountable by cracking down on price-gouging and eliminating unnecessary taxpayer subsidies for the oil industry. I voted twice to eliminate up to \$18 billion in tax subsidies for the oil companies.

Addressing our energy needs requires both short-term and long-term answers. It will require a

thoughtful and comprehensive approach, not heated partisan rhetoric.